



SUBJECT: MORE AVIAN FLU OUTBREAKS IN INDONESIA

Summary:

- The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) announced on March 17 the reemergence of Avian Influenza (AI, or H5N1) in Indonesia.
- MOA, which has the lead on monitoring and eradicating AI, said it was taking all necessary preventive and eradication measures in the affected areas, including vaccination, quarantine, and the issuance of specific guidelines to all levels of governments and stakeholders in the poultry sector.
- The new outbreaks are concentrated in West Java and South Sulawesi. The Navy Medical Research Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, is providing technical assistance.
- While the GOI is confident that it can control the current outbreaks, lack of funding hinders its implementation strategy.
- Transmission of the virus to the human population will be challenging to detect due to a shortage of hospital diagnoses and laboratory analysis capability.

In January 2004, the Government of Indonesia (GOI) acknowledged the existence of AI in Indonesia, which had surfaced in October 2003. United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) representatives in Indonesia agreed to act as the AI coordinator among donor countries and international organizations and subsequently held a series of coordination meetings during the height of the 2004 outbreak. The FAO assisted the GOI in implementing immediate and short-term measures to address the AI threat. Then and now, the FAO's primary concerns have been the threat to human health and the economic impact of the disease.

New Outbreaks of Bird Flu

In a press release dated March 17, 2005, the MOA confirmed media reports that the Avian Influenza (AI) or bird flu has reappeared in several provinces. Officials in the MOA's Deputy Director for Animal Health Prevention, noted that since AI had now become endemic in Indonesia, the MOA expects it to reappear from time to time. They said that in January 2005, the virus surfaced in the West Java districts of Sukabumi and Subang, and Cirebon city. By early March, the disease had spread to the Wajo, Soppeng, Sidrap and Marcos districts in South Sulawesi. The GOI took the necessary preventive and eradication measures, working closely with the Health Ministry and affected

businesses, especially breeders. The MOA officials said the government provides the businesses with vaccines from both local and foreign firms.

In response to the current outbreak, the GOI has apparently decided to adopt the same strategy it used in 2004: enhancing bio-security actions, vaccinating all poultry and depopulating, and taking other measures to prevent, control, and eradicate AI, as outlined in MOA Decree No. 17 of February 2004. In the press release, the MOA said that its monitoring and evaluation of the AI epidemic revealed that it had lasted from January to December 2004, by which time it had subsided and come under control. The MOA asserted that it had succeeded because it had “implemented bio-security procedures and conducted vaccinations mainly for middle and large-scale poultry concerns, but also for small-scale poultry farmers.”

The MOA said the bird flu struck 17 provinces, including 105 districts and cities. It said the number of poultry deaths, as of March 2005, had surpassed 16.2 million. Mortalities peaked in January 2004, when MOA recorded nearly 2.6 million poultry deaths. The MOA acknowledged the January 2005 bird-flu-related poultry deaths (i.e., free-range chicken and quail) in Cirebon, Subang and Sukabumi had occurred because of weaknesses in local bio-security procedures and vaccination programs. To avoid a second epidemic, the GOI has urged regional and local governments to cooperate with all stakeholders in the poultry industry, particularly with respect to raising awareness and instituting “a strict preventive, controlling and eradication AI programs according to GOI guidelines.”

Ministry of Agriculture Circulation Letter

To that end, on February 17, 2005 the MOA issued a Circulation Letter with the following instructions:

- Improve the Early Warning System by reporting to MOA any disease outbreak as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours.
- Provide blood samples (to help with diagnosis) to the government’s Center for Veterinary Investigation and Examination (BPPV) both in the capital and regions.
- Enhance Monitoring and Surveillance in all areas, especially those with high poultry population density and previously hit by AI to facilitate early detection.
- Improve bio-security to avoid contact/contamination with infected livestock.
- Forestall an epidemic by monitoring poultry traffic to prevent the trade in tainted poultry.
- Apply quarantine/isolation of infected livestock.
- Decontaminate or disinfect all materials, tools, vehicles and anything else related to livestock.
- Implement mass vaccination to all poultry farmers in each area affected location.
- Monitor AI vaccine distribution and use (especially of imported vaccine) in the breeding and commercial farms.

- Coordinate with all relevant stakeholders, including animal quarantine authorities, the public and the local poultry in each area.

As part of its mass vaccination program in 2005, the GOI said it has provided 126.5 million vaccine doses and will distribute a further 52 million doses from its central stock to all affected poultry farmers. The GOI noted that it had asked all heads of Provincial Livestock Offices (in AI infected regions) to prepare a supplementary request to the national budget (APBN) for 2005 and 2006 to wipe out the bird flu and urged the affected governors to support the funding request through their regional budgets (APBD).

In addition, the GOI said it has conducted field inspections in coordination with its regional veterinary offices in the affected areas. The GOI said that it had also established crisis centers and hotlines at MOA in Jakarta and in the provinces, districts and cities. (Note: in its 2004 press release, the MOH had also instructed all provinces to report any outbreaks to the MOA, which has the lead AI since it is regarded as a poultry disease.)

GOI Preference for “Vaccination and Depopulation”

MOA officials have reaffirmed Indonesia’s preference for “vaccination and depopulation” over the WHO’s recommended eradication policy of “stamping out” all poultry in affected areas. They have stated the GOI’s eradication policy entails a 9-step strategy of control: (1) improvement of farm bio-security; (2) depopulation in infected areas; (3) vaccination in infected areas; (4) strict control on movement of poultry, poultry products and farm waste; (5) surveillance and tracing back; (6) stamping out in new outbreak areas; (7) restocking; (8) public awareness; and (9) monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Lack of Funding Hinders GOI Strategy

MOA officials acknowledged, however, that lack of funding hinders the government’s AI strategy. Lack of funding also partially explains why many AI cases continue to go unreported--producers are reluctant to report AI cases because they fear depopulation with no compensation from the government. MOA officials stated the Ministry simply does not have the resources required to conduct a thorough “stamping out” program, which is what would most experts believe would be required to fully control the AI problem.

The MOA estimates that in 2004, emergency funds provided 300 million doses of AI vaccines for poultry, most of which went to small-scale or backyard poultry farmers. This represents only half of the planned delivery of vaccines. The rest of those vaccines will be used in 2005. Indonesia will still need to import vaccines in order to provide doses to large and middle-scale farming operations.

U.S. Government Response

Since 2004, the Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU-2) at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta has provided assistance to the GOI at the request of the Ministry of Health. NAMRU-2 has helped in transporting specimens to one of four WHO Influenza Reference Laboratories; conducted tests in 2004 and 2005 on samples taken from humans demonstrating signs of a flu-like illness and who were queried about their degree of contact with poultry; collaborated the Center For Disease Control CDC) in Atlanta on NAMRU2's Viral Disease Program; and partnered with the WHO and the CDC in Atlanta to coordinate a regional training program on Avian Influenza (AI) diagnostics and epidemiology in Bangkok. NAMRU-2 also paid for several MOH officials to participate in the program.

Significant Impact on Poultry Sector

In 2004, the MOA estimated the economic losses due to AI would range between 488 billion rupiah (USD 53 million) if the GOI brought the outbreak under control, and as high as Rp 7.7 trillion (USD 836 million) should the GOI fail to do so. According to a 2004 FAO Report, the AI's impact on the poultry sector was as follows: demand for day-old chicken in infected regions dropped 57.9 percent for broiler and 40.4 percent for layer chickens. In addition, the demand for livestock feed fell 45 percent for all kinds of poultry food; production supply declined 40.7 percent for broiler and 52.6 percent for layer chickens. Moreover, job opportunities in infected regions plunged by 39.5 percent.

Indonesia's 2004 poultry meat production from native chickens, layers (hens) and ducks (the population identified as being infected by AI) was approximately 1.1 million metric tons (MT), with a value of USD 1.4 billion. Poultry meat derived from broiler chickens totaled 780,000 MT, valued at about USD 1 billion. In 2003, Indonesian poultry exports to Japan (its largest export market for poultry) totaled USD 4.9 million. However, preliminary data from the Indonesian Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that total poultry export sales plunged to USD 158,000 between January and October 2004. Contributing to the drop was the decision by Singapore and Malaysia to suspend imports of Indonesian chicken late last year over AI outbreak rumors.

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